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# TRENDS

## CONSUMER ATTITUDES & THE SUPERMARKET

## 1984 UPDATE

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BY LOUIS HARRIS & ASSOCIATES, INC.

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The Food Marketing Institute (FMI) is a non-profit association that conducts programs in research, education and public affairs on behalf of its 1,300 members—food retailers and wholesalers and their customers in the United States and overseas. FMI's domestic member companies operate over 17,000 retail food stores with a combined annual sales volume of $130 billion—half of all grocery sales in the United States. More than three-fourths of FMI's membership is comprised of independent supermarket operators or small regional firms. Its international membership includes more than 100 members from 37 nations.

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# INTRODUCTION

In 1974 the Food Marketing Institute initiated a series of consumer attitude surveys designed to identify the changing needs, values, and priorities of the American consumer. The present study is the thirteenth in this series. *Trends 1984* continues to track and evaluate the major issues and trends from previous years, while adding coverage of new issues that are likely to capture the attention of consumers over the next few years.

## Content of the Study

The major trend lines continued from the previous studies include:

- Consumers' outlook on the economy, including personal expectations and predictions for price changes in the near future;
- Attitudes about supermarket responsibilities and evaluations of supermarkets' performance;
- Economizing and timesaving measures used while shopping;
- Buying habits and shopping behavior; and
- Consumer activism.

In addition to reporting on these issues of longstanding interest to the industry, *Trends 1984* provides an update on the following topics initiated in previous years:

- Consumer preferences for shopping in supermarkets for particular items; and
- The day of the week when most consumers shop.

In 1983 *Trends* addressed consumers' concerns about nutrition and the ingredients in the foods they eat. This year's study continues and expands upon these issues and looks at:

- Specific nutrition-related behaviors;
- Consumer awareness of proper food preparation and handling;
- Avoidance of foods with certain ingredients; and
- Attitudes toward food safety.

This year's study gives special attention to the varying attitudes and shopping practices of different types of households (see Chapter 7). Three different groups are examined:

- "Traditional"households — those households where one spouse is not employed outside the home;
- Two-wage-earner families; and
- Shoppers who are not currently married.

Differences in these groups are further examined on the basis of whether or not there are children in the home.

A demographic profile of the total sample, with weighted and unweighted percentages, appears at the end of this report in the Methodology section.

## Study Design

The data for this survey are based on telephone interviews with a representative nationwide sample of 1,008 male and female shoppers conducted in January 1984. The sample was controlled to consist of 60 percent female and 40 percent male heads of household, and was then weighted to a 80 percent female-20 percent male ratio to maintain comparability with previous studies in the *Trends* series.

## A Note on the Tables

Presented directly beneath the title of each table is a description of the *base;* that is, the group of respondents of whom the question was asked. The exact number of respondents in this base group, either in total or as broken out into subgroups, is provided for all nontrend tables. The percentages shown in each table are calculated on this base number. It should be noted that these percentages may not always add up to 100 percent because of rounding or the acceptance of multiple responses.

For each table, the wording of the question as it was asked this year is provided; any changes in wording from previous years are noted on the table.

Generally, the report presents findings broken out by select subgroups of key interest. Additional analyses of subgroups not included in the report, as well as additional copies of the report, may be obtained from the Food Marketing Institute.

# SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

The following is an overview and summary of the most important findings of *Trends 1984*:

1. *As a result of improved economic conditions, the public has become increasingly optimistic about the future.* For the first time in three years more consumers feel the economy will expand at a healthy rate in 1984 than feel it will not. In 1984, over one-third of the shopping public expect their personal economic situation to improve, while only 15 percent expect it to get worse. Overall, this degree of optimism is unmatched by any prior year's findings since 1977.

2. *Most consumers expect to see a modest increase in supermarket prices.* This year, 54 percent of consumers expect these prices to become a little more expensive. Utility and housing costs are expected to increase more sharply. Lesser increases are anticipated for clothing and restaurant prices, while gasoline prices are anticipated to remain the same or even decrease slightly.

3. *Even though they were already high, overall ratings of supermarkets have improved this year in eight of eleven key service areas.* The only item to show any decline was "speed of checkout" which dropped by one percentage point. This item, which is considered a responsibility of supermarkets by 96 percent of shoppers, received the second lowest rating this year. The lowest rated area was the provision of health and nutrition-related information. However, this item's rating has improved substantially from last year, rising from 70 percent to 78 percent.

4. *The frequency with which consumers look for supermarket specials, use coupons, or do comparison shopping has not changed significantly from last year.* Looking in the newspaper for specials continues to be the most common of these practices, with 63 percent of shoppers doing so frequently. Nonworking women are most likely to look for advertised specials (59 percent) while men are the least likely (38 percent) to do so. Well over half of all shoppers (56 percent) frequently use coupons when they shop.

5. *While the overall use of timesaving strategies has not changed much from last year, shoppers continue to show more interest in stores with fast checkout or that are less crowded.* To save time, shoppers still report they most often take packaged meats rather than ask for special cuts. However, the at least occasional practice of shopping at stores with faster checkouts has increased from 58 percent to 64 percent to 69 percent over the last three years. At least occasional shopping at less crowded stores has also increased during this time period, from 51 percent to 55 percent to 58 percent.

6. *Per person weekly grocery expenditures have continued to increase, rising to a $23 average from $22 last year and $21 the previous year.* Single-person households, at $40 a week, far exceed this per person average. Despite this per person increase, household expenditures declined slightly from $60 last year to $59 this year. This leveling-off at the household level appears to be a result of smaller family sizes.

7. *The frequency of shopping and number of stores visited remain essentially unchanged.* Shoppers report an average of 2.3 trips per week and visit on average 1.6 different stores a week. Shoppers with children tend to make a higher than average number of trips per week and are more likely to visit multiple stores in any given week.

8. *While shopper preference in terms of shopping hours tends to be spread evenly across the morning, afternoon, and early evening, the time of shopping varies by household type.* Shoppers in households with one spouse at home most often shop in the morning, while those in two-wage-earner households more often prefer the early evening hours.

9. *Nearly half of all shoppers have no preference as to the day of the week they shop.* Thursday, Friday, and Saturday are the days most often shopped by those with a preference.

10. *Shoppers continue to view supermarkets as the usual place of purchase for a number of nonfood products.* Substantial percentages of shoppers usually buy paper goods, magazines, nonprescription drugs, and flowers and plants from supermarkets. The proportion of shoppers who usually buy paper goods at supermarkets has dropped six percentage points, to 55 percent, since last year. Most of these sales went to all-purpose drugstores and convenience stores.

11. *While overall consumer activism has not changed, supermarket-related consumer actions have increased modestly.* This year, 56 percent of shoppers have returned a product for refund or exchange, as compared with last year's 52 percent. Also, shoppers are more likely to have switched supermarkets this year than last year (24 percent vs. 21 percent).

12. *Consumer concern with nutrition continues to be very high this year.* Overall, 95 percent of consumers say they are very or somewhat concerned about the nutritional content of the foods they eat. Consumers continue to be unclear as to the specific meaning of nutritional content. This is evidenced by consumers most often mentioning chemicals and additives as one of their concerns. Concerns have not changed much from last year, and vitamin/mineral content and sugar content are still very frequently mentioned.

13. *This concern with nutrition translates into a variety of nutrition-related practices.* Over three out of four shoppers frequently serve nutritional snacks, such as fruits and vegetables. Shoppers also frequently select foods to ensure a balanced diet for their families. A smaller but still substantial proportion (34 percent) of shoppers frequently read articles or books related to nutrition.

14. *Shoppers continue to indicate a high degree of concern about food safety.* Nearly nine out of 10 shoppers (87 percent) say that the statement "I usually check the packages of the foods I buy to make sure it is in good condition" describes them very closely. Nearly all shoppers (96 percent) feel that products should carry cautionary labels if they are allegedly unsafe.

15. *Concerns about tampering with nonprescription drugs have declined, but are still high.* This year, 50 percent of consumers are very concerned about this, as compared to 66 percent last year.

16. *When asked about six specific substances that may be present in food, consumers express a great deal of concern about the presence of these substances and indicate that they avoid products with these substances.* The presence of residues such as pesticides and herbicides in foods is considered a serious hazard by 77 percent of shoppers. As a result, 58 percent say they have avoided buying products that contain such residues. Cholesterol is also considered a serious hazard by 45 percent of shoppers. Of all shoppers, 54 percent say they have avoided buying products because of cholesterol content.

17. *Overall, 79 percent of consumers remember some food items being recalled in the past year because of possible contamination or other problems.* Tuna fish is most often mentioned (30 percent) as being recalled. However, for consumers in the South and West, recalls of cake mixes is the second most frequently mentioned item (14 percent and 13 percent respectively). This is likely due to the recent ethylene dibromide (EDB) problem that led to recalls in these regions of the country.

18. *Despite these concerns, shoppers still view supermarkets as providing safe products.* This year, as last year, 88 percent of all shoppers agree that "the food in supermarkets is safe to eat."

# CHAPTER 1

## THE GENERAL OUTLOOK

### The Economy, Unemployment, and Future Prospects

This past year has been one of marked economic improvement on a number of fronts. The Gross National Product (GNP) increased while at the same time inflation, unemployment, and lending rates all declined. These trends in the domestic economy are generally mirrored by public attitudes toward the future.

To illustrate these changing public attitudes, findings from the Harris Survey have been included in this year's *Trends*. The reader should note that these findings were obtained in November or December, whereas the *Trends* study was conducted in January. Hence, Harris Survey data of December 1983 are most comparable with this year's *Trends* data.

For the first time in three years, a greater percentage of the American public feel that the economy will expand at a healthy rate in the next year than feel it will not. In late 1981 and 1982 slim majorities, 53 percent and 51 percent, respectively, felt that the economy would not expand at a healthy rate. However, by late 1983 this figure had dropped substantially to 41 percent. At that same time, more Americans (49 percent) had believed that the economy would expand. This represents a six-percentage-point increase over late 1982.

**Table 1** **Public Expectations Concerning the Economy: 1981-1983**

Base: The total public*

Q.: A year from now...do you feel that the economy will be expanding at a healthy rate, or not?

| | Total | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Dec. 1981 | Nov. 1982 | Dec. 1983 |
| | % | % | % |
| Will happen | 38 | 43 | 49 |
| Will not happen | 53 | 51 | 41 |
| Not sure | 9 | 6 | 10 |

| | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gross National Product** | $15.1 | $14.9 | $15.4 |
| Inflation*** | 10.4% | 6.1% | 3.2% |

*Data presented are from the Harris Survey of national cross sections of the adult public, 18 years of age and older.
**Gross National Product is listed in hundreds of billions, constant 1972 dollars.
***Inflation is as measured by the consumer price index.

The public has also become increasingly confident over the past three years in terms of unemployment being reduced. In late 1981 a slight majority (51 percent) felt that unemployment would not be reduced, while in late 1982 a slim plurality (48 percent vs. 46 percent) continued to be pessimistic about the level of unemployment. Thus, while public attitudes improved slightly from late 1981 to 1982, overall attitudes were still slightly negative. However, most recently, those who expect to see a further decline in unemployment increased by 6 percentage points to 52 percent while those who do not expect to see any improvement in the unemployment picture declined by 5 percentage points to 43 percent.

**Table 2** **Public Expectations Concerning Unemployment: 1981-1983**

Base: The total public*

Q.: A year from now...do you feel that unemployment will be reduced to below where it is now, or not?

| | Total | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Dec. 1981 | Nov. 1982 | Dec. 1983 |
| | % | % | % |
| Will happen | 42 | 46 | 52 |
| Will not happen | 51 | 48 | 43 |
| Not sure | 7 | 6 | 5 |

| | Jan. 1982 | Jan. 1983 | Jan. 1984 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Unemployment | 8.6% | 10.4% | 8.0% |

*Data presented are from the Harris Survey of national cross sections of the adult public, 18 years of age and older.

While the American public has continued to express generally more optimism over the past three years, their expectations also remain realistic. In late 1981, when asked whether or not interest rates would decline sharply in the next year, 53 percent felt they would not while 40 percent felt they would. In 1982, the public was just slightly more positive, with 51 percent still not anticipating any major reduction in interest rates and 43 percent expecting a reduction. By 1983, interest rates had dropped to their lowest level in four years. Not surprisingly, the public's expectations for further decreases were minimal. By late 1983, only 24 percent felt that any further substantial decreases would occur, while the vast majority (69 percent) expected to see no further dramatic decreases in interest rates.

**Table 3** **Public Expectations Concerning Interest Rates: 1981-1983**

Base: The total public*

Q.: A year from now...do you feel that interest rates will have come down sharply, or not?

| | Total | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Dec. 1981 | Nov. 1982 | Dec. 1983 |
| | % | % | % |
| Will happen | 40 | 43 | 24 |
| Will not happen | 53 | 51 | 69 |
| Not sure | 7 | 6 | 7 |

| | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Prime Rate | 15.3% | 14.8% | 10.8% |

*Data presented are from the Harris Survey of national cross sections of the adult public, 18 years of age and older.

In 1984, consumers' optimism about their personal economic prospects has increased dramatically. Most (48 percent) expect their economic situation to remain the same in the coming year. This figure is identical to the 1983 measure. However, since 1983 the number of consumers who are optimistic has increased by 8 percentage points. In 1983 only 26 percent felt their situation would improve, while in 1984 34 percent expect an improvement in the next year. In contrast, pessimism has decreased by a corresponding eight percentage points, from 23 percent in 1983 to 15 percent in 1984. Overall, this degree of optimism is unmatched by any prior year's findings since 1977.

An examination of various key subgroups reveals that the most optimistic shoppers are those in the younger age groups of 18-24 year olds and 25-39 year olds. For these two groups, 53 percent and 43 percent, respectively, feel their situation will improve. Older shoppers are more likely to expect their situation to remain the same.

A similar pattern emerges by income; those with an income of $7,500 or less are most pessimistic (25 percent feel their situation will get worse), while the highest income group is most optimistic (42 percent expect their situation to improve).

Blacks are the only subgroup more likely to have a negative outlook than a positive outlook.

**Table 4** **Expectations for Next Year's Personal Economic Situation: 1976-1984**

Base: The total public and the shopping public*

Q.: Looking at the situation personally, do you think your own economic situation will improve in the next year, get worse, or remain about the same?

| | Total | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Aug. 1976 | Feb. 1977 | Feb. 1979 | Mar. 1980 | Jan. 1981 | Jan. 1982 | Jan. 1983 | **Jan. 1984** |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Improve | 30 | 41 | 26 | 24 | 28 | 28 | 26 | 34 |
| Get worse | 11 | 12 | 26 | 29 | 26 | 25 | 23 | 15 |
| Remain about the same | 53 | 43 | 45 | 45 | 40 | 43 | 48 | 48 |
| Not sure | 6 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 |

*Data presented for 1981 through 1984 are from the sample of shoppers used for the *Trends* surveys. All trend data prior to 1981 are from the Harris Survey of national cross sections of the adult public, 18 years of age and older.

Table 5

## How Subgroups Compare in Their Expectations for Next Year's Personal Economic Situation

Base: The shopping public

Q.: Looking at the situation personally, do you think your own economic situation will improve in the next year, get worse, or remain about the same?

| | Base | | Improve | Get Worse | Remain About the Same | Not Sure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Total** | **1008** | % | **34** | **15** | **48** | **3** |
| *Size of Family* | | | | | | |
| 1 | 137 | % | 29 | 19 | 45 | 7 |
| 2 | 359 | % | 31 | 15 | 49 | 5 |
| 3-4 | 378 | % | 40 | 12 | 48 | 1 |
| 5 and over | 120 | % | 33 | 20 | 46 | 2 |
| *Age* | | | | | | |
| 18-24 years | 78 | % | 53 | 11 | 32 | 4 |
| 25-39 years | 373 | % | 43 | 14 | 41 | 1 |
| 40-49 years | 191 | % | 35 | 14 | 49 | 3 |
| 50-64 years | 213 | % | 26 | 17 | 54 | 3 |
| 65 and older | 143 | % | 12 | 17 | 62 | 10 |
| *Income* | | | | | | |
| $7,500 or less | 97 | % | 29 | 25 | 39 | 9 |
| $7,501-$15,000 | 154 | % | 27 | 19 | 51 | 4 |
| $15,001-$25,000 | 243 | % | 32 | 16 | 49 | 3 |
| $25,001 and over | 387 | % | 42 | 9 | 47 | 2 |
| *Region* | | | | | | |
| East | 255 | % | 38 | 16 | 42 | 3 |
| Midwest | 259 | % | 31 | 16 | 49 | 5 |
| South | 298 | % | 32 | 14 | 51 | 4 |
| West | 195 | % | 37 | 13 | 48 | 1 |
| *Size of Place** | | | | | | |
| Central city | 311 | % | 36 | 20 | 40 | 4 |
| Remainder of metropolitan area | 445 | % | 35 | 11 | 51 | 3 |
| Outside metropolitan area | 251 | % | 31 | 15 | 51 | 4 |
| *Race* | | | | | | |
| White | 889 | % | 35 | 12 | 49 | 3 |
| Black | 70 | % | 25 | 35 | 39 | 3 |
| Hispanic | 48 | % | 40 | 28 | 30 | 2 |

*Prior to the 1984 study, the Size of Place categories examined were cities, suburbs, and small town/rural. The current Size of Place categories are in accord with U.S. Census Bureau definitions utilized in the 1980 Census. These categories are similar to, although not definitionally equivalent to, prior categories.

## Projected Price Changes

Last year's *Trends* study showed a dramatic decrease in the proportion of shoppers who expected supermarket prices to rise sharply or get a good deal more expensive. This year's study shows an increase in this proportion (21 percent) over last year (15 percent), but is still less than in January 1982 (30 percent).

While this anticipation of increased supermarket prices is modest, it does contrast with most of the other price changes shoppers were asked to project. This year, shoppers expect to see less dramatic increases in utility prices, as well as restaurant and clothing prices. Most shoppers surveyed expect gasoline prices to stay the same, or actually get a little cheaper. The one item for which shoppers expect to see greater price increases this year than last year is housing. In 1983, 19 percent expected to see housing costs rise sharply or get a good deal more expensive, and another 30 percent expected housing to get a little more expensive. This year, the corresponding figures are 23 percent and 39 percent. This expectation regarding housing costs may be a result of consumer recognition of the relatively low interest rate mortgages available.

**Table 6** **Price Changes Expected in Next Six Months: 1982-1984**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: What do you personally think will happen to (READ EACH ITEM) in the next six months — will it get a little cheaper, stay the same, get a little more expensive, get a good deal more expensive, or rise sharply?

| | | Jan. 1982 | Jan. 1983 | Jan. 1984 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | A Good Deal More Expensive/ Rise Sharply | A Good Deal More Expensive/ Rise Sharply | A Good Deal More Expensive/ Rise Sharply | A Little More Expensive | Stay the Same | A Little Cheaper | Not Sure |
| The cost of utilities | % | 57 | 53 | 45 | 42 | 10 | 1 | 2 |
| The cost of housing | % | 28 | 19 | 23 | 39 | 23 | 7 | 7 |
| Supermarket prices | % | 30 | 15 | 21 | 54 | 19 | 4 | 2 |
| The price of clothing | % | 21 | 17 | 10 | 46 | 37 | 3 | 4 |
| Restaurant prices | % | 17 | 13 | 10 | 50 | 31 | 2 | 7 |
| Gasoline prices | % | 23 | 23 | 8 | 27 | 42 | 17 | 6 |

# CHAPTER 2

## THE CONSUMER'S VIEW OF SUPERMARKETS

### Responsibilities of Supermarkets

As in 1983, majorities of the shopping public identify nine out of eleven possible services as being the responsibility of supermarkets. The top three services expected from supermarkets by the public continue to be "making sure their employees give good service to their customers" (98 percent), "getting you through checkout quickly" (96 percent), and "having readable and accurate shelf tags" (95 percent). The services expected of supermarkets by less than a majority of shoppers continue to be "helping you pick the best value for the money" (49 percent) and "providing nutrition and health information" (37 percent).

The percent of shoppers who feel these services should be provided by supermarkets remains essentially unchanged. The largest increase, 3 percentage points, occurs for the service "helping you by having a wide variety of items for one-stop shopping." One item, "making sure you don't buy old, stale, or spoiled products," increased by two percentage points. For the remaining services, the proportion of shoppers who consider these the job of supermarkets increased by one percentage point or remained constant. Interestingly, this year no service declined in the proportion of shoppers who feel that it should be the responsibility of supermarkets.

Although the extent to which shoppers consider these services the responsibility of supermarkets has not changed over time, there are some noticeable differences that occur by the type of household.

Shoppers in two-wage-earner households are more likely to demand services that allow for quick and easy shopping, particularly if they have children. Thus, this group more often expects quick checkout, readable shelf tags, easy and pleasurable shopping, and that their favorite products be kept in stock. In contrast, respondents who are unmarried are uniformly less demanding with regard to these types of convenience services.

However, shoppers who are currently unmarried but who have children are the most demanding when it comes to more cost-related services. This group, more than any other group, expects supermarkets to offer house brands, help them save money with specials, help them pick the best value, and provide nutrition information.

In general, shoppers who are unmarried and without children are the least demanding in terms of employee service, the ease of shopping, the stocking of favorite products, one-stop shopping, house brands, and money-saving specials.

**Table 7** **How Shoppers in Different Types of Households Compare in their Views of Supermarket Responsibilities**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: Do you feel that supermarkets are responsible for (READ EACH ITEM) or don't you feel that's their job?

| | | Jan. 1984 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Married, Two Wage Earners | | Married, One Spouse Home | | Not Married | |
| | Jan. 1983 Total | Total | No Children | Children | No Children | Children | No Children | Children |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| *Supermarkets Are Responsible for:* | | | | | | | | |
| Making sure their employees give good service to their customers | 97 | 98 | 98 | 99 | 99 | 99 | 95 | 96 |
| Getting you through checkout quickly | 95 | 96 | 95 | 99 | 93 | 98 | 96 | 93 |
| Having readable and accurate shelf tags | 94 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 92 | 97 | 94 | 94 |
| Making sure you don't buy old, stale, or spoiled products | 91 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 91 | 94 | 92 | 96 |
| Making shopping easier and more pleasurable | 88 | 89 | 92 | 92 | 89 | 91 | 87 | 87 |
| Keeping your favorite products in stock | 87 | 88 | 87 | 91 | 89 | 87 | 85 | 89 |
| Helping you by having a wide variety of items for one-stop shopping | 80 | 83 | 81 | 86 | 84 | 83 | 79 | 90 |
| Providing you with cheaper house brands or unbranded products | 76 | 76 | 81 | 84 | 66 | 80 | 69 | 84 |
| Helping you save your money with their specials | 75 | 76 | 81 | 77 | 75 | 76 | 73 | 82 |
| Helping you pick the best value for the money | 49 | 49 | 43 | 53 | 50 | 45 | 48 | 61 |
| Providing nutrition and health information | 37 | 38 | 36 | 32 | 40 | 38 | 36 | 50 |

## Ratings of Supermarket Services

In 1983, consumers gave supermarkets high marks for their performance on the eleven services. Despite this, ratings have improved even more in 1984. This year, for eight of the eleven services, a greater percentage of shoppers feel that supermarkets do an excellent or pretty good job. The single greatest increase has occurred in the area of providing nutrition and health information. This year, 78 percent of shoppers who consider this service the responsibility of supermarkets feel that supermarkets do at least a pretty good job, an 8-percentage-point increase over last year.

Of these eleven services, six are rated as excellent or pretty good by at least 90 percent of customers. However, of the three services most often expected from supermarkets — making sure employees give good service, getting you through checkout quickly, and having readable and accurate shelf tags — only employee service achieves this 90 percent level of approval. The rating of tag accuracy and readability has increased from last year's 81 percent level to 84 percent this year. However, consumer satisfaction with the speed of checkout actually has dropped — although only by 1 percentage point to 79 percent this year. Of the eleven services, checkout speed receives the second lowest rating.

Households with two wage earners and no children are generally the most satisfied with supermarkets. For eight out of the eleven services, 90 percent or more of the customers in this group give supermarkets positive ratings. In contrast, shoppers who are not married but have children are generally the least satisfied. For this group, only three of the eleven services receive positive ratings by 90 percent or more.

**Table 8** **How Shoppers in Different Types of Households Rate Supermarket Service**

Base: Shoppers who feel supermarkets are responsible for each item

Q.: Do you feel that the supermarket in which you usually shop does an excellent, pretty good, not very good, or poor job of (READ EACH ITEM)?

| | | Jan. 1984 | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Married, Two Wage Earners | | Married, One Spouse Home | | Not Married | |
| | | Jan. 1983 Total | Total | No Children | Children | No Children | Children | No Children | Children |
| | | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| *Supermarkets Do an Excellent or Pretty Good Job of:* | | | | | | | | | |
| Helping you by having a wide variety of items for one-stop shopping | % | 92 | 95 | 98 | 97 | 98 | 92 | 94 | 88 |
| Making shopping easier and more pleasurable | % | 91 | 93 | 97 | 90 | 93 | 93 | 92 | 90 |
| Keeping your favorite products in stock | % | 92 | 92 | 93 | 95 | 93 | 90 | 91 | 89 |
| Making sure their employees give good service to their customers | % | 90 | 92 | 97 | 90 | 94 | 91 | 91 | 86 |
| Helping you save your money with their specials | % | 88 | 91 | 93 | 90 | 94 | 93 | 84 | 90 |
| Making sure you don't buy old, stale, or spoiled products | % | 90 | 90 | 96 | 93 | 91 | 90 | 85 | 91 |
| Providing you with cheaper house brands or unbranded products | % | 86 | 89 | 85 | 90 | 96 | 91 | 86 | 86 |
| Helping you pick the best value for the money | % | 86 | 88 | 93 | 82 | 91 | 90 | 85 | 88 |
| Having readable and accurate shelf tags | % | 81 | 84 | 91 | 82 | 84 | 85 | 81 | 84 |
| Getting you through checkout quickly | % | 80 | 79 | 76 | 77 | 86 | 78 | 77 | 78 |
| Providing nutrition and health information | % | 70 | 78 | 79 | 69 | 84 | 77 | 78 | 83 |

Supermarket ratings have improved from 1983 to 1984 by three percentage points on four services, and the service of "providing nutrition and health information" has shown an eight-percentage-point increase. The greatest strides in improved service appear to have been achieved in the East. This year 78 percent of shoppers in the East say that supermarkets do an excellent or pretty good job of providing health and nutrition information. This represents an 18-percentage-point increase over last year's 60 percent figure. This group of shoppers also is substantially more positive this year about the readability and accuracy of shelf tags. This year 84 percent rate supermarkets positively on this service, up 11 percentage points from last year.

**Table 9** **Regional Improvements in Ratings of Supermarket Services**

Base: Shoppers who feel supermarkets are responsible for each item

Q.: Do you feel that the supermarket in which you usually shop does an excellent, pretty good, not very good, or poor job of (READ ITEM)?

| | Total | | Region | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | East | | Midwest | | South | | West | |
| | 1983 | 1984 | 1983 | 1984 | 1983 | 1984 | 1983 | 1984 | 1983 | 1984 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| *Supermarkets do an Excellent or Pretty Good Job of:* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Helping you by having a wide variety of items for one-stop shopping | 92 | 95 | 92 | 95 | 91 | 96 | 94 | 94 | 91 | 94 |
| Helping you save your money with their specials | 88 | 91 | 86 | 91 | 87 | 91 | 88 | 89 | 91 | 92 |
| Providing you with cheaper house brands or unbranded products | 86 | 89 | 81 | 85 | 88 | 92 | 89 | 90 | 88 | 90 |
| Having readable and accurate shelf tags | 81 | 84 | 73 | 84 | 84 | 87 | 85 | 85 | 80 | 80 |
| Providing nutrition and health information | 70 | 78 | 60 | 78 | 74 | 80 | 78 | 79 | 69 | 74 |

## Other Important Supermarket Services

To further explore the types of services supermarkets should provide, shoppers were asked to volunteer the top two or three most important services. Since this question was also asked in 1982 and 1983, the results can be viewed to determine if any systematic changes have occurred over time.

The three most frequently mentioned services remain unchanged in rank from 1983. These are "fast checkout," mentioned by 33 percent, "variety, wide selection" (27 percent), and "good, low prices" (25 percent). However, the mention of "good, low prices" has declined from the recession year 1982 when it was the most often mentioned service.

The single largest change from 1983 has occurred in the percent mentioning "good service." This item was mentioned by only seven percent of shoppers in 1983 and was ranked thirteenth. This year 18 percent mention this item, and its rank climbs to sixth place in importance. This increase represents a significant return to the 1982 level of concern for "good service" when it was ranked fourth.

Other changes in rank from 1983 include a drop from fifth to eighth place for mentions of "keep shelves well stocked." Also, specific comments related to "fresh produce/fruits and vegetables" have continued to increase in rank, from tenth in 1982 to seventh in 1983 and to fifth place this year.

**Table 10**

## Shoppers Volunteer What They Feel Are The Two or Three Most Important Services Supermarkets Can Provide: 1982-1984

Base: The shopping public

Q.: What do you think are the two or three most important services your supermarket can provide? What else?

| | 1982 | | 1983 | | 1984 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Rank | Total | Rank | Total | Rank |
| | % | # | % | # | % | # |
| Fast checkout | 30 | 2 | 39 | 1 | 33 | 1 |
| Variety, wide selection | 27 | 3 | 29 | 2 | 27 | 2 |
| Good/low prices | 33 | 1 | 28 | 3 | 25 | 3 |
| Courteous, friendly employees | 18 | 4 | 28 | 3 | 19 | 4 |
| Fresh produce/fruits and vegetables | 12 | 10 | 15 | 7 | 18 | 5 |
| Good service | 18 | 4 | 7 | 13 | 18 | 6 |
| Clean store | 15 | 6 | 16 | 6 | 16 | 7 |
| Keep shelves well stocked | 15 | 6 | 17 | 5 | 14 | 8 |
| Good/better/fresh meat | 8 | 12 | 13 | 9 | 14 | 9 |
| Fresh products | 13 | 9 | 15 | 7 | 13 | 10 |
| Quality products | 15 | 6 | 12 | 10 | 13 | 11 |
| Items on sale, money saving specials | 10 | 11 | 8 | 12 | 8 | 12 |
| Items clearly marked for price | 8 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 6 | 13 |
| Convenient layout of store | x | x | x | x | 4 | 14 |
| Grocery carryout service | 4 | 14 | 4 | 14 | 3 | 15 |
| Check cashing | x | x | 2 | 16 | 3 | 16 |
| Better store hours, longer hours | 2 | 15 | 1 | 20 | 2 | 17 |
| No old, stale products | 2 | 15 | 2 | 16 | 2 | 18 |
| Wide aisles | x | x | x | x | 1 | 19 |
| Have advertised items in stock | 2 | 15 | 3 | 15 | 1 | 20 |
| Generic/unbranded products | x | x | 2 | 16 | 1 | 20 |
| Coupons | 1 | 18 | 1 | 20 | 1 | 22 |
| Carts in good condition | x | x | 1 | 20 | 1 | 23 |
| Bakery on premises | x | x | 1 | 20 | 1 | 23 |
| Pharmacy on premises | x | x | x | x | 1 | 23 |
| Nutritional information | x | x | 2 | 16 | 1 | 26 |
| Convenient parking | x | x | 1 | 20 | 1 | 26 |
| All other | 6 | - | 2 | - | 4 | - |
| Not sure/no answer | 4 | - | 4 | - | 4 | - |

x = Not broken out, included in "all other."

# CHAPTER 3

## SAVING TIME AND MONEY

### Methods of Economizing

Shoppers were asked about three methods of economizing in this year's study. "Stocking up when you find a good bargain" continues to be a frequently used method of economizing. The 77 percent of shoppers who report this type of activity reflect a two-percentage-point increase over last year. However, when viewed from a longer term perspective, this practice seems to be fairly stable at least since 1980. In contrast, the practice of buying cheaper cuts of meat has dropped three percentage points from last year to 43 percent. This drop appears to be the continuation of a trend that began in 1980.

The third item, "eating out less often," was first asked in 1982. Last year this item showed a five-percentage-point drop, from 52 percent to 47 percent. This year, however, shoppers have reconsidered, and just over half (51 percent) now say that eating out less often is a method used to economize.

**Table 11**

**Methods of Economizing in Shopping and in Home Meal Planning and Preparation: 1974-1984**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: I'm going to read you some things that people have told us they do to economize on their food bills. For each one, please tell me whether this is something that you've been doing for a few years and are continuing to do now to economize, something that you've just begun to do recently, something you may do later, or something that doesn't apply to you.

| | Total | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Nov. 1974 | Mar. 1978 | Feb. 1980 | Jan. 1981 | Jan. 1982 | Jan. 1983 | **Jan. 1984** |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| *Been Doing or Recently Begun:* | | | | | | | |
| *Shopping* | | | | | | | |
| Stocking up when you find a good bargain | 67 | 70 | 77 | 79 | 76 | 75 | 77 |
| Buying cheaper cuts of meat | 59 | 47 | 60 | 52 | 49 | 46 | 43 |
| *Meal Planning and Preparation* | | | | | | | |
| Eating out less often | x | x | x | x | 52 | 47 | 51 |

x = Not asked.

## Frequency of Economizing

The frequency with which shoppers utilize supermarket specials, coupons, and price comparisons has not varied appreciably from last year. The largest change that has occurred is in the percent of shoppers who "look in the newspaper for grocery specials" pretty much every time they shop, or fairly often. Whereas in 1983 67 percent did this, this year the figure drops very slightly to 63 percent.

Nevertheless, looking for specials in the newspaper remains the most common of the four practices asked about. The use of coupons is the second most frequently used method of economizing, with 56 percent of shoppers using them pretty much every time they shop, or fairly often. Shoppers are slightly more likely to compare prices at different stores this year than last year. Last year, 47 percent did this pretty much every time they shopped, or fairly often, as compared to 50 percent this year. This year, as last, consumers report a general reluctance to shop at stores other than their principal store. Only 29 percent report going to a store other than their principal one pretty much every time they shop, or fairly often. The frequency of use of these economizing activities varies greatly by type of shopper. Nearly six out of 10 (59 percent) of nonworking women look in the newspaper for specials pretty much every time they shop. This compares to less than half (46 percent) of working women and about four out of ten men (38 percent). This pattern is fairly consistent across the type of shopper for the three other activities as well.

From a regional perspective, Midwesterners are most likely to look in the newspaper for specials, compare prices at different supermarkets, and shop at stores other than their principal one for specials. Easterners are most likely to use price-off coupons. Shoppers in the West are least likely to use any of these economizing techniques.

**Table 12** **How Often Shoppers Use Supermarket Specials, Coupons, and Price Comparisons**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: How often do you (READ EACH ITEM) — pretty much every time you shop, fairly often, only occasionally, or never?

| | | 1983 | 1984 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Pretty Much Every Time | Pretty Much Every Time | Fairly Often | Only Occasionally | Never | Not Sure |
| Look in the newspaper for grocery specials | % | 52 | 49 | 14 | 21 | 15 | - |
| Use price-off coupons | % | 38 | 39 | 17 | 31 | 12 | * |
| Compare prices at different supermarkets | % | 30 | 29 | 21 | 30 | 20 | * |
| Go to supermarkets other than your principal one for advertised specials | % | 13 | 12 | 17 | 47 | 23 | 1 |

*Less than 0.5%.

**Table 13** **How Subgroups and Shoppers in Different Locations Vary in Their Use of Supermarket Specials, Coupons, and Price Comparisons**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: How often do you (READ EACH ITEM) — pretty much every time you shop, fairly often, only occasionally, or never?

| | Total | Men | Working Women | Non-working Women | Region: East | Region: Mid-west | Region: South | Region: West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Base | 1008 | 404 | 312 | 279 | 255 | 259 | 299 | 195 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| *Pretty Much Every Time:* | | | | | | | | |
| Look in the newspaper for grocery specials | 49 | 38 | 46 | 59 | 54 | 57 | 44 | 39 |
| Use price-off coupons | 39 | 31 | 38 | 44 | 45 | 43 | 34 | 31 |
| Compare prices at different supermarkets | 29 | 27 | 25 | 35 | 26 | 33 | 30 | 23 |
| Go to supermarkets other than your principal one for advertised specials | 12 | 11 | 8 | 17 | 10 | 15 | 12 | 10 |

## Saving Time in the Supermarket

The strategies that consumers use most often for saving time have not changed from 1983 to this year. The three strategies used by 30 percent or more of shoppers pretty much every time they shop are:

- Taking available packaged meat rather than asking for a different cut (38 percent);
- Looking only at the items they know they need (33 percent); and
- Buying larger quantities to avoid frequent shopping.

Roughly one in four shoppers usually (pretty much every time) shop at particular time of day to avoid crowds (28 percent) and shop at a particular store because it has a faster checkout system (24 percent).

**Table 14** **How Shoppers Save Time in the Supermarket**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: People do different things to save time when shopping. For each of the following, please tell me how often you personally do this to save time when grocery shopping. Do you (READ EACH ITEM) pretty much every time you shop, fairly often, only occasionally, or never?

| | | 1983 | 1984 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Pretty Much Every Time | Pretty Much Every Time | Fairly Often | Only Occasionally | Never | Doesn't Apply (Vol.) | Not Sure |
| Take packaged meat available rather than ask for a different cut | % | 33 | 38 | 18 | 24 | 15 | 5 | * |
| Look only at the items you know you need | % | 36 | 33 | 28 | 24 | 13 | 1 | * |
| Buy larger quantities to avoid frequent shopping | % | 28 | 30 | 25 | 27 | 16 | 2 | 1 |
| Go to the supermarket at a particular time of day to avoid crowds | % | 30 | 28 | 22 | 24 | 22 | 2 | 1 |
| Shop at a particular supermarket because it has a better or faster checkout system | % | 23 | 24 | 20 | 25 | 26 | 4 | 1 |
| Shop at a particular supermarket because it's less crowded | % | 15 | 15 | 15 | 28 | 36 | 5 | 1 |
| Buy packaged fruits and vegetables rather than bothering to have them weighed | % | 12 | 10 | 11 | 46 | 30 | 2 | 1 |
| Buy certain brands because they're more visible and easier to find | % | 12 | 10 | 16 | 38 | 33 | 2 | 1 |
| Buy only enough to use the quick checkout line | % | 5 | 5 | 8 | 49 | 36 | 2 | 1 |
| Go to a convenience store rather than a supermarket | % | 3 | 4 | 6 | 48 | 41 | 1 | * |

*Less than 0.5%.

Last year's *Trends* study identified four timesaving strategies that showed some change from 1982. To determine whether or not these changes continue into 1984, the percent of shoppers who at least occasionally use these strategies was trended over 1982, 1983, and 1984. The percent of shoppers who at least occasionally shop at a supermarket because it has a better or faster checkout system has continued to increase. Over the three years, this figure has increased from 58 percent to 64 percent to 69 percent.

Similarly, shopping at a particular supermarket because it is less crowded is a practice adopted by an increasing proportion of shoppers. In 1982, 43 percent of shoppers used this timesaving practice at least occasionally. By 1983, this figure had increased to 55 percent, and this year almost six in 10 shoppers (58 percent) use this strategy at least occasionally.

The prevalence of consumers who occasionally buy more visible and easier to find brands to save time has also continued to increase. This year, 64 percent of shoppers report this practice, which represents a three-percentage-point gain over last year's 61 percent. Last year's figure, in turn, was five percentage points higher than in 1981, when 56 percent of shoppers bought more visible brands at least occasionally.

The one major change found last year that did not continue in 1984 related to going to a convenience store rather than a supermarket. Last year's study found a significant decrease in the at least occasional use of this timesaving activity, from 59 percent to 52 percent. Not only has this trend not continued for this year, it has, in fact, returned to 58 percent, almost matching the 1981 level of incidence. Urban shoppers are the most likely to use these timesaving techniques, while shoppers who live outside of metropolitan areas, or live in the South, are the least likely to use them.

**Table 15** **Changes in How Shoppers Save Time in the Supermarket: 1982-1984**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: People do different things to save time when shopping. For each of the following, please tell me how often you personally do this to save time when grocery shopping — pretty much every time you shop, fairly often, only occasionally, or never?

| | | Jan. 1982 | | | Jan. 1983 | | | Jan. 1984 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | At Least Occasionally | Never Do | Doesn't Apply/ Not Sure | At Least Occasionally | Never Do | Doesn't Apply/ Not Sure | At Least Occasionally | Never Do | Doesn't Apply/ Not Sure |
| Shop at a particular supermarket because it has a better or faster checkout system | % | 58 | 36 | 6 | 64 | 30 | 7 | 69 | 26 | 5 |
| Buy certain brands because they're more visible and easier to find | % | 56 | 41 | 3 | 61 | 38 | 3 | 64 | 33 | 3 |
| Shop at a particular supermarket because it's less crowded | % | 51 | 43 | 6 | 55 | 38 | 7 | 58 | 36 | 6 |
| Go to a convenience store rather than a supermarket | % | 59 | 39 | 2 | 52 | 47 | 1 | 58 | 41 | 1 |

Note: At least occasionally = pretty much every time you shop, fairly often, and only occasionally.

**Table 16**

## How Shoppers in Different Locations Vary in the Ways They Save Time in the Supermarket

Base: The shopping public

Q.: People do different things to save time when shopping. For each of the following, please tell me how often you personally do this to save time when grocery shopping. Do you (READ EACH ITEM) pretty much every time you shop, fairly often, only occasionally, or never?

| | | Size of Place* | | | Region | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Central City | Remainder of Metro-politan Area | Outside Metro-politan Area | East | Mid-west | South | West |
| Base | 1008 | 311 | 445 | 252 | 255 | 259 | 299 | 195 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| *Those Who at Least Occassionally:* | | | | | | | | |
| Shop at a particular supermarket because it has a better or faster checkout system | 69 | 73 | 69 | 66 | 68 | 70 | 67 | 72 |
| Buy certain brands because they're more visible and easier to find | 64 | 69 | 62 | 63 | 62 | 71 | 59 | 65 |
| Shop at a particular supermarket because it's less crowded | 58 | 65 | 56 | 54 | 62 | 58 | 52 | 63 |
| Go to a convenience store rather than a supermarket | 58 | 61 | 59 | 51 | 62 | 61 | 50 | 61 |

*Prior to the 1984 study, the Size of Place categories examined were cities, suburbs, and small town/rural. The current Size of Place categories are in accord with U.S. Census Bureau definitions utilized in the 1980 Census. These categories are similar to, although not definitionally equivalent to, prior categories.

# CHAPTER 4

## SHOPPING PATTERNS

### The Weekly Grocery Bill

This year, for the first time since *Trends* initially asked consumers to estimate weekly family grocery expenses, there has not been an increase over the previous year. Overall, shoppers report an average expenditure this year of $59 a week for groceries, just under last year's amount.

**Table 17** **Family Weekly Grocery Expenses: 1981-1984**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: About how much do you spend each week on groceries for your family?

| | Total | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jan. 1981 | Jan. 1982 | Jan. 1983 | Jan. 1984 |
| | % | % | % | % |
| $0-$40 | 29 | 30 | 28 | 23 |
| $41-$60 | 29 | 25 | 29 | 29 |
| $61-$80 | 21 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| $81-$100 | 10 | 11 | 13 | 13 |
| $101 and over | 6 | 8 | 9 | 9 |
| Not sure/no answer | 5 | 7 | 1 | 4 |
| Average Weekly Grocery Expenses | $55 | $58 | $60 | $59 |

This lack of increase in total family expenditure is, in part, a function of smaller households. While total household expenditure has dropped slightly from last year, the per person expenditure has increased slightly, from $22 to $23.

This per person expenditure varies most significantly by the size of household. Single-person households spend substantially more on a per person basis, at an average of $40 a week, while households of five or more spend substantially less than average per person, at $15 a week. This disparity by household size has also increased from last year. Last year, one-person households reported spending $33 a week, $7 less than this year. In contrast, last year, households of five or more reported spending $16 per person per week, actually $1 more than this year. Two other groups, shoppers who live in the South, and those who live outside of metropolitan areas, report slight decreases in per person weekly expenses. This year, households where men are the principal shoppers show a markedly higher than average per person weekly expenditure of $28.

**Table 18** **Average Per Person Weekly Grocery Expenses: 1982-1984**

Base: The shopping public

| | Jan. 1982 | Jan. 1983 | **Jan. 1984** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Total** | **$21** | **$22** | **$23** |
| *Principal Shoppers* | $21 | $22 | $23 |
| Men | $23 | $23 | $28 |
| Women | $21 | $22 | $22 |
| *Married* | | | |
| One spouse at home | $20 | $20 | $22 |
| Two wage earners | $22 | $22 | $23 |
| *Size of Family* | | | |
| 1 | $33 | $33 | $40 |
| 2 | $26 | $27 | $29 |
| 3-4 | $20 | $21 | $22 |
| 5 and over | $17 | $16 | $15 |
| *Type of Family* | | | |
| With children | $19 | $19 | $19 |
| No children | $25 | $28 | $28 |
| *Region* | | | |
| East | $23 | $22 | $23 |
| Midwest | $20 | $20 | $22 |
| South | $20 | $24 | $23 |
| West | $23 | $24 | $24 |
| *Size of Place** | | | |
| Central city | $21 | $22 | $24 |
| Remainder of metropolitan area | $23 | $23 | $24 |
| Outside metropolitan area | $20 | $22 | $21 |

*Prior to the 1984 study, the Size of Place categories examined were cities, suburbs, and small town/rural. The current Size of Place categories are in accord with U.S. Census Bureau definitions utilized in the 1980 Census. These categories are similar to, although not definitionally equivalent to, prior categories.

## Number of Supermarkets Used and Number of Supermarket Visits in an Average Week

The number of supermarkets visited each week has remained virtually unchanged from last year. On average, shoppers visit 1.6 supermarkets per week, with 51 percent visiting only one store in any given week. However, of those shoppers who visit only one store per week, 10 percent report that they visit different stores from week to week.

**Table 19** **Number of Different Supermarkets Shoppers Use: 1981-1984**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: About how many different supermarkets do you usually visit in a week to do your weekly shopping?

| | Total | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jan. 1981 | Jan. 1982 | Jan. 1983 | **Jan. 1984** |
| | % | % | % | % |
| 1 | 46 | 56 | 50 | 51 |
| 2 | 39 | 34 | 37 | 37 |
| 3 | 11 | 8 | 11 | 9 |
| 4 or more | 5 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Average number of different supermarkets visited per week | 1.8 | 1.5 | 1.6 | 1.6 |

The number of shopping trips made per week has also remained unchanged. Shoppers report making an average of 2.3 trips to the supermarket per week. Although not shown in the table, it is worth noting that this average is relatively consistent across regions of the country.

**Table 20** **How Often Shoppers Go to the Supermarket in an Average Week: 1981-1984**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: About how many visits do you make to the supermarket in an average week — that includes going to the same store more than once and going to different stores?

| | Total | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jan. 1981 | Jan. 1982 | Jan. 1983 | **Jan. 1984** |
| | % | % | % | % |
| 1 | 26 | 31 | 31 | 31 |
| 2 | 33 | 32 | 34 | 31 |
| 3 | 21 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| 4 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 8 |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| 6 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Every 2 weeks | 1 | 1 | * | 2 |
| Average number of visits to the supermarket per week | 2.6 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.3 |

*Less than 0.5%.

Traditional and less traditional households vary little in the number of supermarkets visited each week. However, shoppers without children tend to visit fewer supermarkets than their counterparts with children.

**Table 21** **Number of Different Supermarkets Shoppers Use**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: About how many different supermarkets do you usually visit in a week to do your weekly shopping?

| | | Married, Two Wage Earners | | Married, One Spouse Home | | Not Married | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | No Children | Children | No Children | Children | No Children | Children |
| Base | 1008 | 127 | 151 | 220 | 190 | 227 | 76 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| *Number of Supermarkets* | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 51 | 60 | 43 | 52 | 44 | 57 | 48 |
| 2 | 37 | 28 | 41 | 39 | 41 | 35 | 41 |
| 3 | 9 | 11 | 14 | 6 | 12 | 6 | 10 |
| 4 | 1 | - | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Average number of different supermarkets visited per week | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 1.5 | 1.7 |

A similar pattern exists for the overall number of visits made per week by these different types of households. Shoppers with children report more trips per week than those without children. Also, unmarried shoppers report making more trips per week than their married counterparts.

**Table 22** **How Often Shoppers Go to the Supermarket**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: About how many visits do you make to the supermarket in an average week — that includes going to the same store more than once and going to different stores?

| | | Married, Two Wage Earners | | Married, One Spouse Home | | Not Married | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | No Children | Children | No Children | Children | No Children | Children |
| Base | 1008 | 127 | 151 | 220 | 190 | 227 | 76 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| *Number of Visits* | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 31 | 39 | 20 | 38 | 29 | 35 | 16 |
| 2 | 31 | 29 | 37 | 32 | 25 | 30 | 39 |
| 3 | 20 | 21 | 24 | 14 | 25 | 17 | 23 |
| 4 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 11 | 6 | 10 |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| 6 or more | 3 | - | 1 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 9 |
| Every 2 weeks | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| Average number of visits to supermarket per week | 2.3 | 2.0 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 2.4 | 2.2 | 2.7 |

## Shopping Hours

Nearly equal numbers of consumers say they usually shop in the morning (26 percent), afternoon (24 percent), and early evening (26 percent). These preferences are similar to those found last year, although the early evening was slightly less favored last year, and afternoon was slightly more favored.

**Table 23** **Time of Day Shoppers Usually Go To Supermarkets: 1981-1984**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: At what time of day do you usually go — in the morning, around noon, in the afternoon, early evening, or late evening?

| | Total | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jan. 1981 | Jan. 1982 | Jan. 1983 | Jan. 1984 |
| | % | % | % | % |
| Morning | 31 | 27 | 27 | 26 |
| Noon | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 |
| Afternoon | 25 | 28 | 27 | 24 |
| Early evening | 21 | 26 | 23 | 26 |
| Late evening | 6 | 6 | 8 | 8 |
| No special time (volunteered) | 9 | 8 | 9 | 9 |

While the number of shoppers who favor these three time periods is roughly the same, the time of day preferred varies markedly by the type of household. Shoppers in the most traditional households, those with one spouse at home, clearly prefer the morning hours for their shopping. Not surprisingly, shoppers in households with two wage earners have equally strong preferences for shopping in the early evening. The afternoon hours generally represent the second choice time period for shoppers in all three groups.

**Table 24** **How Shoppers Vary in the Time of Day They Usually Go to the Supermarket**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: And, what time of day do you usually go — in the morning, around noon, in the afternoon, early evening, or late evening?

| | | Married, Two Wage Earners | | Married, One Spouse Home | | Not Married | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | No Children | Children | No Children | Children | No Children | Children |
| Base | 1008 | 127 | 151 | 220 | 190 | 227 | 76 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Morning | 26 | 14 | 18 | 43 | 36 | 15 | 20 |
| Noon | 7 | 9 | - | 7 | 10 | 6 | 6 |
| Afternoon | 24 | 18 | 25 | 21 | 28 | 29 | 23 |
| Early evening | 26 | 36 | 41 | 13 | 14 | 29 | 34 |
| Late evening | 8 | 18 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 13 | 13 |
| No special time (volunteered) | 9 | 5 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 7 | 6 |

## Shopping — Day of Week Preferences

Nearly half (46 percent) of all shoppers claim to have no special day that they have set aside for shopping. Of those shoppers who do shop on a particular day of the week, most prefer Thursday, Friday, or Saturday. Day of week preference for shopping varies by the type of household. Shoppers in households where one spouse is at home are more likely to shop on weekdays, and also slightly more likely to specify a particular day. Shoppers in two-wage-earner households are the most likely to shop on Saturday. However, the overriding pattern, regardless of type of household, is that the first four days of the week — Sunday through Wednesday — are far less likely to be considered as shopping days.

**Table 25** **Day of Week Shoppers Usually Go to Supermarket**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: On what day of the week do you do most of your food shopping — or isn't there any special day?

| | | Married, Two Wage Earners | | Married, One Spouse Home | | Not Married | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | No Children | Children | No Children | Children | No Children | Children |
| Base | 1008 | 127 | 151 | 220 | 190 | 227 | 76 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Monday | 3 | 5 | 1 | * | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| Tuesday | 5 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 4 | 2 |
| Wednesday | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 9 |
| Thursday | 14 | 13 | 17 | 15 | 14 | 14 | 6 |
| Friday | 13 | 11 | 9 | 14 | 16 | 11 | 13 |
| Saturday | 12 | 13 | 20 | 9 | 8 | 11 | 15 |
| Sunday | 1 | 1 | 2 | * | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| No special day | 46 | 50 | 43 | 48 | 37 | 50 | 52 |
| Not sure | * | - | - | * | - | 1 | - |

*Less than 0.5%.

## Supermarkets vs. Other Stores

In 1982, shoppers were asked where they usually purchase various types of food and other products. This question was asked again this year, with some new products added. Of the six items asked about in 1982 and this year, supermarkets lost ground in three categories. The proportion of consumers who shopped at supermarkets for health and beauty aids slipped slightly from 23 percent to 21 percent, as did the proportion of consumers who shopped at supermarkets for magazines, from 37 percent to 35 percent. Consumers' choice of supermarkets for paper goods declined by 6 percentage points, from 61 percent to 55 percent. Half of the supermarket loss in paper goods, three percentage points, went to all-purpose drugstores, and another two percentage points went to convenience stores. The two items which show increases in supermarket purchases from 1982 are household repair and houseware items, which has jumped from 10 percent to 15 percent, and prescription drugs, which has increased from four percent to six percent. Supermarket purchases of greeting cards remain nearly constant, with 13 percent of shoppers reporting usually purchasing them at supermarkets.

The four new items asked about this year were bakery goods, with 71 percent of shoppers most often making these purchases at supermarkets, fresh seafood, with 53 percent, nonprescription drugs, with 29 percent, and flowers and plants, with 23 percent of consumers most often making these purchases at supermarkets.

**Table 26** **Where Consumers Usually Shop for Various Items**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: Please tell me where you would usually shop for each of the following items — a supermarket, a convenience store, an all-purpose drugstore, or a discount department store?

| | 1982 | 1984 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Supermarket | Supermarket | Convenience Store | Drugstore | Discount Store | Don't Shop | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Bakery goods | x | 71 | 2 | - | * | 3 | 22 |
| Paper goods | 61 | 55 | 4 | 11 | 23 | * | 5 |
| Fresh seafood | x | 53 | 2 | * | 1 | 14 | 29 |
| Magazines | 37 | 35 | 4 | 18 | 7 | 18 | 16 |
| Nonprescription drugs | x | 29 | 1 | 53 | 13 | 3 | 1 |
| Flowers and plants | x | 23 | 3 | 3 | 20 | 8 | 41 |
| Health and beauty aids | 23 | 21 | 2 | 42 | 27 | 2 | 5 |
| Household repair and houseware items | 10 | 15 | 4 | 4 | 52 | 2 | 21 |
| Greeting cards | 12 | 13 | 4 | 34 | 25 | 2 | 21 |
| Prescription drugs | 4 | 6 | 1 | 85 | 4 | 2 | 3 |

x = Not asked in 1982.
*Less than 0.5.%.

# CHAPTER 5

## CONSUMER ACTIVISM

### General Consumer Activism

From last year to this year, consumer activism has remained at a fairly steady level. Refusing to buy products that cost too much continues to be the predominant action that consumers have taken or are ready to take (79 percent). This represents a very slight increase of two percentage points over last year. Writing letters to congressmen remains at an all-time low level. As was the case last year, 42 percent of shoppers have already written or are ready to write such a letter. Getting neighbors to sign petitions showed a slight decline from last year. The proportion of consumers who are at least ready to get neighbors to sign petitions has dropped three percentage points, to 27 percent. This continues the general downward trend since 1977 for this measure. Forming organized boycotts continues to be the least often practiced form of activism. Exactly one shopper in four (25 percent) is at least ready to take this type of action. This is a slight increase of two percentage points over last year.

**Table 27** **Consumers' Views on Taking Different Actions on their Complaints**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: How do you personally feel about (READ EACH ITEM)? Is this something you already have done, something you are ready to do, something you can sympathize with but wouldn't do, or something you think is ineffective, wrong, or illegal?

| Base: 1008 | | Already Have Done | Ready To Do | Sympathize With but Wouldn't Do | Ineffective, Wrong, or Illegal | Not Sure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Refusing to buy products which cost too much | % | 72 | 8 | 13 | 4 | 4 |
| Writing letters to your congressman demanding that the government do something | % | 19 | 22 | 37 | 17 | 5 |
| Getting neighbors to sign petitions | % | 13 | 14 | 48 | 17 | 8 |
| Joining organized consumer boycotts against particular products or stores | % | 9 | 16 | 47 | 21 | 7 |

**Table 28** **Actions That Consumers Are Willing To Take: 1977-1984**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: How do you personally feel about (READ EACH ITEM)? Is this something you already have done, something you are ready to do, something you can sympathize with but wouldn't do, or something you think is ineffective, wrong, or illegal?

| | Total | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Apr. 1977 | Mar. 1978 | Feb. 1980 | Jan. 1981 | Jan. 1982 | Jan. 1983 | **Jan. 1984** |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| *Already Have Done or Ready To Do:* | | | | | | | |
| Refusing to buy products which cost too much | 82 | 74 | 86 | 80 | 85 | 77 | 79 |
| Writing letters to your congressman demanding that the government do something | 66 | 54 | 65 | 50 | 45 | 42 | 42 |
| Getting neighbors to sign petitions | 48 | 39 | 50 | 33 | 33 | 30 | 27 |
| Joining organized consumer boycotts against particular products or stores | 38 | 24 | 36 | 27 | 27 | 23 | 25 |

## Supermarket-Related Activity

While general consumer activism has showed no consistent pattern of change from last year, actions more directly focused on the supermarket industry have shown small but consistent increases. Historically, returning unsatisfactory products has been the most often practiced activity. This is even more the case this year. A four-percentage-point increase over last year (from 52 percent to 56 percent) has occurred in the number of shoppers who have returned products for a refund or exchange. The percent of shoppers who have switched supermarkets has also increased, rising to 24 percent this year, from 21 percent last year. Letterwriting to food manufacturers or supermarkets has also showed a three-percentage-point increase this year. This year, almost one shopper in 10 (nine percent) has written some form of complaint letter. This represents a three-percentage-point increase over last year, and is the highest rate since the question was first asked in 1981.

In-person complaints continue to be made by roughly one out of three (35 percent) consumers to food store or supermarket managers. This is the second most common supermarket-related activity, and has increased by three percentage points over last year.

**Table 29** **Actions Shoppers Have Taken on Supermarket-Related Complaints: 1981-1984**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: In the past year, have you (READ EACH ITEM), or not?

| | Total | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jan. 1981 | Jan. 1982 | Jan. 1983 | **Jan. 1984** |
| | % | % | % | % |
| *Yes, Have:* | | | | |
| Returned products to a supermarket for a refund or exchange | 57 | 53 | 52 | 56 |
| Made an in-person complaint to a food store or supermarket manager | 41 | 33 | 32 | 35 |
| Switched supermarkets because you were dissatisfied | 34 | 24 | 22 | 21 |
| Told a friend or neighbor to stop going to a particular store or supermarket | 22 | 14 | 13 | 12 |
| Written a letter of complaint to a food manufacturer or supermarket | 8 | 7 | 6 | 9 |
| Joined a food co-op in your area | 4 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

# CHAPTER 6

## NUTRITIONAL CONTENT AND FOOD AND PRODUCT SAFETY

### Nutritional Content

Consumers continue to be generally very concerned about the nutritional content of what they eat. This year, 63 percent indicate they are very concerned, while another 32 percent say they are somewhat concerned about nutritional content. Only four percent say they are not very, or not at all concerned. Compared to last year, some variations have occurred among certain subgroups in terms of the percent who are very concerned. The three most concerned groups last year were nonworking women (68 percent), urban dwellers (71 percent), and Westerners (69 percent). This year, nonworking women have dropped to the average level of concern (63 percent), while Westerners have dropped to below average (59 percent). However, consumers who live in the city continue to express the highest level of concern (71 percent) of any group examined. In contrast, Midwesterners who were least concerned last year (56 percent) have expressed greater concern this year (63 percent).

**Table 30** **Level of Shoppers' Concern About The Nutritional Content of Foods**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: Would you say you and your family are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not at all concerned about the nutritional content of what you eat?

| | | 1983 | 1984 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Very Concerned | Very Concerned | Somewhat Concerned | Not Very/ Not at All Concerned | Not Sure |
| **Total** | % | 64 | 63 | 32 | 4 | 1 |
| *Sex* | | | | | | |
| Men | % | 62 | 62 | 32 | 5 | - |
| Women | % | 65 | 64 | 32 | 4 | 1 |
| Working | % | 63 | 64 | 31 | 5 | 1 |
| Nonworking | % | 68 | 63 | 33 | 3 | 1 |
| *Type of Family* | | | | | | |
| With children | % | 65 | 62 | 34 | 4 | - |
| No children | % | 63 | 64 | 31 | 4 | 1 |
| *Age* | | | | | | |
| 18-24 years | % | 61 | 51 | 42 | 5 | 1 |
| 25-39 years | % | 64 | 58 | 38 | 5 | - |
| 40-49 years | % | 61 | 67 | 31 | 3 | - |
| 50-64 years | % | 68 | 71 | 25 | 3 | 1 |
| 65 and over | % | 65 | 67 | 24 | 7 | 2 |
| *Size of Place*** | | | | | | |
| Central city | % | 71 | 71 | 24 | 4 | 1 |
| Remainder of metropolitan area | % | 64 | 61 | 34 | 4 | * |
| Outside metropolitan area | % | 61 | 58 | 36 | 5 | 1 |
| *Region* | | | | | | |
| East | % | 67 | 66 | 29 | 4 | 1 |
| Midwest | % | 56 | 63 | 32 | 4 | - |
| South | % | 66 | 62 | 32 | 4 | 1 |
| West | % | 69 | 59 | 35 | 5 | - |

*Less than 0.5%.
**Prior to the 1984 study, the Size of Place categories examined were cities, suburbs, and small town/rural. The current Size of Place categories are in accord with U.S. Census Bureau definitions utilized in the 1980 Census. These categories are similar to, although not definitionally equivalent to, prior categories.

Consumers tend to identify many concerns about nutritional content. As was the case in 1983, when asked to volunteer what concerns them most about the nutritional content of food, consumers most often mention (25 percent) chemical additives. While last year, vitamin/mineral content was the second most frequently mentioned concern (24 percent), this year, more consumers (22 percent) are preoccupied with the sugar content of food. That is not to say that vitamin/mineral content is not a concern. This concern ranks third this year, and is mentioned by 19 percent of all shoppers. This year, the number of shoppers who specifically mention food or nutritional value has nearly doubled, rising from 10 percent to 19 percent. Mentions of calorie content and cholesterol level have both increased by three percentage points this year, although at nine percent and eight percent mentions, respectively, these are issues of concern to relatively few consumers. Consumers are still concerned about preservatives in foods, although the percent mentioning this issued have dropped, from 22 percent last year to 17 percent this year. Concerns about foods being as natural as possible have also declined, from 12 percent to six percent.

**Table 31** **Nature of Shoppers' Concern About The Nutritional Content of Foods**

Base: The shopping public that is very or somewhat concerned about the nutritional content of what they eat

Q.: What is it about the nutritional content of what you eat that concerns you and your family the most? What else?

| | 1983 Total | 1984 Total | Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | |
| Chemical additives (e.g., flavoring, MSG, steroids) | 27 | 25 | −2 |
| Sugar content, less sugar | 21 | 22 | +1 |
| Vitamin/mineral content | 24 | 19 | −5 |
| Food/nutritional value | 10 | 19 | +9 |
| No preservatives | 22 | 17 | −5 |
| Salt content, less salt | 18 | 17 | −1 |
| Freshness, purity, no spoilage | 14 | 12 | −2 |
| Making sure we get a balanced diet | 10 | 9 | −1 |
| Calories, low calories | 6 | 9 | +3 |
| Fat content, low in fat | 9 | 8 | −1 |
| Cholesterol levels | 5 | 8 | +3 |
| As natural as possible, not overly processed | 12 | 6 | −6 |
| No harmful ingredients, nothing that causes illness/cancer | 10 | 6 | −4 |
| Protein value | 5 | 6 | +1 |
| Quality of food | 3 | 5 | +2 |
| Excess food coloring/dyes | 6 | 4 | −2 |
| Empty calories, junk food | 4 | 4 | - |
| Carbohydrate content | 1 | 2 | +1 |
| Fiber content | 2 | 1 | −1 |
| Starch content | 1 | 1 | - |
| Other | 2 | 4 | +2 |
| Don't know/refused | 5 | 5 | - |

## Preparation and Handling of Food

This year's *Trends* asked several new questions on the subject of nutrition and food safety, designed to assess consumer understanding and behavior related to these areas. One question focussed on consumer understanding of the proper preparation and handling of food, and took the form of a series of agree-disagree statements.

Nearly all shoppers (97 percent) recognize that fresh fruit should be washed prior to eating. Similarly, more that nine out of 10 consumers (95 percent) recognize that after preparing raw poultry, meat, or fish, they should wash hands, cutting boards, and utensils prior to handling other foods. Also, better than nine out of 10 consumers (93 percent) are aware that canned juices should be transferred to a nonmetal container after opening. Shoppers are less certain about how quickly fresh fish should be eaten. Nearly one in four do not recognize that fresh fish should be eaten within one day. Men, more often than women, are unaware of this. Roughly one out of three men (35 percent) do not recognize that fresh fish must be eaten immediately.

**Table 32** **How Consumers Vary In Their Knowledge of Food Handling**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: Now I'm going to read some statements related to the preparation and handling of food. For each statement please tell me whether you agree or disagree.

| | | | | | Education | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Men | Working Women | Non-working Women | High School or Less | Some College or More |
| Base | 1008 | 404 | 312 | 279 | 545 | 454 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| *Agree* | | | | | | |
| It is necessary to wash fresh fruit before eating it | 97 | 95 | 96 | 98 | 97 | 96 |
| After preparing raw poultry, meat, or fish, hands, cutting boards, and utensils should be washed before handling other food products | 95 | 92 | 94 | 98 | 95 | 94 |
| Once opened, canned juices should be transferred to a nonmetal container | 93 | 91 | 92 | 95 | 94 | 91 |
| Fresh fish should be eaten within one day after purchase | 76 | 65 | 79 | 76 | 74 | 78 |

## Nutrition-Related Behavior

Another question asked for the first time in this year's study examined the frequency with which shoppers perform a number of nutrition-related activities. About three out of every four shoppers (76 percent) report that they frequently serve nutritional snacks, such as fruits and vegetables, and frequently select foods to ensure a balanced diet for their family. Roughly half (53 percent) frequently check government grading on meats and poultry, and frequently select recipes for their nutritional content (48 percent). Shoppers are less likely to frequently check food labels for protein and fat content (44 percent), or to avoid buying products with no nutritional information (40 percent). Of the seven activities asked about, reading articles and books on nutrition is the least frequently practiced activity, at 34 percent.

While shoppers may vary in terms of how often they perform these activities, it is worth noting that very few say they never perform them. Avoiding buying products that have no nutritional information is the item the greatest percent of shoppers say they never perform (21 percent).

**Table 33** **Consumer Behavior Related to Nutrition**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: How often do you (READ EACH ITEM) – frequently, occasionally, rarely, or never?

| Base: 1008 | | Frequently | Occasionally | Rarely | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Serve nutritional snacks, such as fruits and vegetables | % | 76 | 19 | 3 | 2 |
| Select foods to balance family's diet | % | 76 | 17 | 3 | 3 |
| Check government grading on meats | % | 53 | 23 | 9 | 14 |
| Select recipes for their nutritional content | % | 48 | 27 | 12 | 12 |
| Check food labels for protein and fat content | % | 44 | 30 | 12 | 13 |
| Avoid buying products that have no nutritional information | % | 40 | 24 | 13 | 21 |
| Read articles and books on nutrition | % | 34 | 37 | 15 | 13 |

## Consumer Behavior and Food Safety

This year, as in 1983, shoppers were asked how closely five safety-related statements describe them. Nearly nine out of 10 shoppers (87 percent) say that the statement "I usually check the packaging of the foods I buy to make sure it is in good condition" describes them very closely. This is a slight (two percentage point) increase over last year's results. The greatest increase occurred for the statement "I almost always check the dates on dated foods." Last year, 76 percent of shoppers said this statement described them very closely, while, this year, 79 percent say it does.

The greatest decrease from last year to this year has occurred for the statement "I feel concerned that some ingredients added to processed foods may be harmful or unsafe to eat." Last year, exactly half (50 percent) of consumers said this statement described them very closely. This figure has dropped to 47 percent this year. The remaining two statements, "I avoid buying certain foods because I am concerned about whether they are safe" and "I pay a good deal of attention to the list of ingredients on food labels," display little change from last year. This year, 46 percent and 40 percent of shoppers, respectively, very closely identify with these statements.

Last year's *Trends* speculated that the high degree of identification with the checking of package condition may have been due to the product tampering incidents that occurred in 1982. The fact that shoppers continue to identify with this statement this year suggests that the checking of packages has become a standard shopper practice.

**Table 34** **Consumer Behavior and Food Safety**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: The following are statements that other people have made. For each one, please tell me how close it comes to describing you — very close, somewhat close, not very close, or not at all.

| | | 1983 | 1984 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Very Close | Very Close | Somewhat Close | Not Very Close | Not at All | Not Sure |
| I usually check the packaging of the foods I buy to make sure it is in good condition | % | 85 | 87 | 11 | 1 | 1 | - |
| I almost always check the dates on dated foods | % | 76 | 79 | 13 | 5 | 2 | * |
| I feel concerned that some ingredients added to processed foods may be harmful or unsafe to eat | % | 50 | 47 | 33 | 12 | 7 | 1 |
| I avoid buying certain foods because I am concerned about whether they are safe | % | 46 | 46 | 29 | 12 | 12 | 1 |
| I pay a good deal of attention to the list of ingredients on food labels | % | 41 | 40 | 34 | 17 | 8 | * |

*Less than 0.5%.

## Attitudes Toward Food and Product Safety

This year's *Trends* shows a greater desire on the part of consumers for supermarkets and manufacturers to take an active role in product safety. This year, 96 percent of consumers strongly or somewhat agree that "products should carry cautionary labels for allegedly unsafe products." This is a four-percentage-point increase over the 92 percent figure of last year. The same four-point increase occurs in the statement "supermarkets should refuse to carry allegedly unsafe products." This year, 89 percent of shoppers strongly or somewhat agree with this statement.

Although consumers seem to expect more protection this year than last year, they still feel that "the food in supermarkets is safe to eat." For this year, 88 percent of shoppers agree with this statement -- a figure unchanged from last year.

## Table 35

### Food and Product Safety and the Supermarket

Base: The shopping public

Q.: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly.

| | | 1983 | 1984 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Strongly/ Somewhat Agree | Strongly/ Somewhat Agree | Strongly/ Somewhat Disagree | Not Sure |
| Products should carry cautionary labels for allegedly unsafe ingredients | % | 92 | 96 | 3 | 1 |
| Supermarkets should refuse to carry allegedly unsafe products | % | 85 | 89 | 11 | 1 |
| The food in supermarkets is safe to eat | % | 88 | 88 | 10 | 1 |

While shoppers may feel that supermarkets and manufacturers have a responsibility to ensure the safety of products, they continue to rely mostly on themselves when it comes to the ultimate purchase decision. Nearly half of all consumers (48 percent) feel this way. Roughly one out of five of all shoppers (22 percent) look to the federal government to ensure the safety of products that they purchase. Reliance on manufacturers has declined over time, from 17 percent in 1979, to 13 percent in 1983, to 11 percent this year. Reliance on retailers has remained at a low five percent over this same time period. Compared to last year, more consumers rely on consumer organizations. However, the increase, from six percent to nine percent of consumers who feel this way, is not sufficient to suggest that these organizations are playing a major role in product safety. Also, this year's nine percent figure is less than half of the 19 percent figure of 1979.

## Table 36

### Those Whom Shoppers Rely on to Ensure That The Products They Buy Are Safe: 1979, 1983, and 1984

Base: The total public and the shopping public**

Q.: As far as you personally are concerned, whom do you rely on most to be sure that the products you buy are safe — the federal government, the state government, consumer organizations, manufacturers, retailers, or yourself as an individual?

| | Total | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1979 | 1983 | 1984 |
| | % | % | % |
| Yourself as an individual | 39 | 46 | 48 |
| Federal government | 18 | 24 | 22 |
| Manufacturers | 17 | 13 | 11 |
| Consumer organizations | 19 | 6 | 9 |
| Retailers | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| State government | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Other (volunteered) | 1 | * | 1 |
| None (volunteered) | * | 1 | * |
| Not sure | 2 | 2 | 1 |

*Less than 0.5%.
**Data presented for 1979 is from the Harris Perspective Report Number Sixty, based on a cross section of the total public, not just the shopping public.

To further address the issue of food safety and nutrition, this year's study asked consumers about their level of concern for the presence of certain substances in foods. Consumers overwhelmingly consider residues, such as pesticides and herbicides, as the most hazardous of the six items asked about. Better than three-fourths (77 percent) consider residues to be a serious hazard. Cholesterol is next on the list, with 45 percent of consumers considering this to be a serious hazard in food. For the remaining four items — salt, additives and preservatives, sugar, and artificial coloring — consumers express less but still substantial concern. The majority of consumers consider these items to be "somewhat of a hazard" rather than a serious hazard.

Evidence of this concern can be seen in shoppers' avoidance of products containing these items. With the exception of products containing artificial coloring, a majority of shoppers have avoided buying products with these substances. Products with additives and preservatives are avoided by most shoppers (58 percent). However, it would appear that products with residues would have been avoided more often if shoppers were more able to determine if the products contained residues. For this item, a large percentage of shoppers (15 percent) volunteered that they could not tell if a product contained residues.

The reader may note that these findings pertaining to health hazards are somewhat different than the findings for shoppers' nutritional concerns shown earlier in Table 31. These differences do not indicate shopper inconsistency, but rather reflect different issues. The findings shown in Table 31 relate to overall nutritional concern in the total shopping process. Thus, sugar can be a key nutritional concern because it is present to some degree in many foods and is a dietary consideration. However, its presence in food does not normally constitute a serious health hazard. In contrast, residues are viewed as a health hazard if present in food. However, because residues are less often found in food, they are not considered to be a key nutritional concern.

**Table 37** **Consumer Concern About Selected Food Attributes**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: How concerned are you about the following items being in food? Would you say that (READ EACH ITEM) (is/are) a serious health hazard, somewhat of a hazard, or not a hazard at all?

| Base: 1008 | | Serious Hazard | Something of a Hazard | Not a Hazard at All | Not Sure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Residues, such as pesticides and herbicides | % | 77 | 18 | 2 | 3 |
| Cholesterol | % | 45 | 48 | 5 | 2 |
| Salt in food | % | 37 | 53 | 9 | 1 |
| Additives and preservatives | % | 32 | 55 | 8 | 4 |
| Sugar in food | % | 31 | 53 | 15 | 1 |
| Artificial coloring | % | 26 | 53 | 17 | 5 |

**Table 38** **Consumer Avoidance of Selected Food Attributes**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: In the past year, have you avoided buying any products because they contained (READ EACH ITEM)?

| Base: 1008 | | Have Avoided | Have Not Avoided | Couldn't Tell | Not Sure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Additives and preservatives | % | 58 | 41 | * | 1 |
| Residues, such as pesticides and herbicides | % | 56 | 26 | 15 | 3 |
| Cholesterol | % | 54 | 44 | 1 | 1 |
| Sugar in food | % | 53 | 46 | - | 1 |
| Salt in food | % | 51 | 49 | - | * |
| Artificial coloring | % | 42 | 57 | * | 1 |

*Less than 0.5%.

## Product Tampering

Last year's *Trends* devoted a number of questions to the issue of product tampering as a result of the 1982 incidents. Although product tampering has ceased to be an issue worthy of major news coverage, consumers still express concern about this.

Half of all shoppers this year are still very concerned about tampering with nonprescription drugs. While this is a substantial decline from the 66 percent figure in 1983, shoppers are hardly at ease about the issue of product tampering.

**Table 39** **Level of Shoppers' Concern About Tampering with Nonprescription Drugs on Retail Shelves**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: At this time, are you personally very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not at all concerned about the possibility that nonprescription drugs may be tampered with on retail store shelves?

| | 1983 | 1984 |
|---|---|---|
| | % | % |
| Very concerned | 66 | 50 |
| Somewhat concerned | 19 | 26 |
| Not very/not at all concerned | 15 | 23 |
| Not sure | * | 1 |

*Less than 0.5%.

## Food Recalls

Another area related to food safety is the extent of food recalls. This year, shoppers were asked if they remembered any foods being recalled in the past year and, if so, what foods these were. A surprisingly high level of shoppers (79 percent) remember some type of food recall. Overall, Easterners are the most likely (83 percent) to remember such recalls, followed by Westerners (80 percent). However, the specific products remembered vary substantially by region. Of those who remember any food recall, 30 percent mention tuna fish. This is the most often mentioned product for shoppers in all four regions of the country. Recalls of mushrooms are the next most frequently mentioned by shoppers in the East and Midwest (16 percent and 13 percent, respectively).

However, for Southerners and Westerners, cake mix is the most often mentioned recall (14 percent and 13 percent) after tuna fish. This is likely due to the recent ethylene dibromide (EDB) problem that led to recalls in these regions of the country. More than 10 percent of Southerners also mention recalls of flour (13 percent) and cereal (11 percent), while 12 percent of Westerners mention salmon as being recalled, and 11 percent mention Tylenol.

## Table 40 Types of Foods Consumers Remember Being Recalled

Base: The shopping public

Q.: In the past year, do you remember hearing or seeing any notices or announcements of food items being recalled because of possible contamination or other problems?

Q.: What foods were these? Any others?

| | | Region | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | East | Mid-west | South | West |
| Base | 1008 | 269 | 263 | 313 | 163 |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes, remember | 79 | 83 | 76 | 76 | 80 |
| Base: Those that remember | 793 | 223 | 201 | 238 | 130 |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Tuna fish | 30 | 39 | 24 | 24 | 32 |
| Mushrooms | 11 | 16 | 13 | 8 | 4 |
| Cake mix | 8 | 4 | 3 | 14 | 13 |
| Baby foods | 7 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 8 |
| Canned goods (unspecified) | 7 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 6 |
| Salmon/canned salmon | 7 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 12 |
| Fish/canned fish | 7 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 9 |
| Flour | 6 | 2 | 4 | 13 | 2 |
| Tylenol | 6 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 11 |
| Cereal | 5 | 2 | 2 | 11 | 6 |
| Soup | 5 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 3 |
| Cheese | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| Meat (unspecified) | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| New sugar substitute Nutrasweet (or its equivalent) | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Milk | 2 | - | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| Saccharin | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Canned tomatoes | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | 1 |
| Peanut butter | 1 | * | - | 1 | 2 |
| Tea | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | - |
| Tomato sauce | 1 | 1 | - | - | 2 |
| Hamburger meat | 1 | * | * | 1 | - |
| Shrimp | 1 | * | - | 1 | 1 |
| Other | 13 | 10 | 14 | 13 | 15 |
| Not sure | 20 | 19 | 25 | 20 | 15 |

*Less than 0.5%.

# CHAPTER 7

## A COMPARISON OF TRADITIONAL AND LESS TRADITIONAL HOUSEHOLDS WITHIN THE SHOPPING PUBLIC

This year's *Trends* examines in detail the similarities and differences of shoppers within three different types of households. The largest of these three, and perhaps considered the most traditional, are shoppers who are married and where one spouse is not employed outside of the home on a full-time basis. This description applies to 41 percent of all shoppers interviewed. The other two groups consist of shoppers who are not currently married (30 percent), and those who are married and both spouses can be considered as wage earners (28 percent).

Each of these groups is further divided on the basis of whether or not there are children in the household. For these three household types, the presence or absence of children sometimes directly relates to some of the key measures examined. In these cases, differences that are observed may be obvious and unsurprising. In other cases, however, differences are less obvious and lead to greater understanding of supermarket shoppers.

One of the more obvious differences occurs in terms of family size. Unmarried shoppers without children generally comprise single-person households. Married shoppers without children are part of predominantly two-person households, whether or not both spouses work. The most interesting finding is that two-wage-earner households are generally comprised of smaller families than households where one spouse is at home. Only one in four two-wage-earner households with children, are comprised of families of five or more, while one-third of the single-wage-earner households with children fit this description.

Also not surprising, shoppers in two-wage-earner households have the highest yearly income, with well over half of the shoppers in this category reporting an annual income greater than $25,000. Interestingly, those without children have incomes somewhat higher than those with children. While unmarried shoppers have the lowest yearly income of the three groups, those without children, similar to those in two-wage-earner households, have higher incomes than their counterparts with children. However, for households with one spouse at home, just the opposite is true. For shoppers in these households, the presence of children corresponds with slightly higher income.

The age of shoppers from these various groups also differs markedly. Across all three groups, shoppers with children in the household are likely to be younger. Unmarried shoppers without children, because they consist of single, divorced, and widowed individuals, show the greatest diversity in age.

The degree of optimism shoppers express about their own personal economic situation appears to be related to both their income and age. Shoppers in two-wage-earner households, because of their income, are most likely to be positive in this regard. Shoppers over the age of 65 are most often in the category of "one spouse at home without children," or "unmarried, without children." As a result, shoppers in these two types of households are more likely to foresee no change in their economic situation.

The presence of children in the household has a major impact on per person grocery expenditures. Shoppers in households without children spend almost 50 percent more per person than do shoppers in households with children.

**Table 41** **Demographic Profile of Traditional and Less Traditional Types of Households**

Base: The shopping public

| | Total | Married, Two Wage Earners | | Married, One Spouse at Home | | Unmarried | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No Children | Children | No Children | Children | No Children | Children |
| Base | 1008 | 127 | 151 | 220 | 190 | 227 | 76 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| *Family Size* | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 14 | - | - | 2 | - | 60 | - |
| 2 | 36 | 75 | 1 | 81 | 1 | 27 | 24 |
| 3-4 | 37 | 23 | 75 | 17 | 65 | 13 | 55 |
| 5 and over | 12 | 1 | 24 | 1 | 35 | - | 21 |
| *Income* | | | | | | | |
| $7,500 or less | 10 | 3 | 1 | 14 | 3 | 20 | 20 |
| $7,501-$15,000 | 16 | 6 | 10 | 21 | 13 | 18 | 35 |
| $15,001-$25,000 | 24 | 16 | 20 | 22 | 28 | 29 | 23 |
| $25,001 and over | 37 | 64 | 58 | 24 | 45 | 21 | 16 |
| *Age* | | | | | | | |
| 18-24 years | 8 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 12 | 14 |
| 25-39 years | 37 | 33 | 51 | 8 | 66 | 29 | 43 |
| 40-49 years | 20 | 28 | 36 | 10 | 20 | 11 | 29 |
| 50-64 years | 21 | 28 | 10 | 43 | 11 | 18 | 10 |
| 65 years and over | 14 | 1 | - | 33 | 1 | 29 | 4 |
| *Personal Economic Situation in Next Year* | | | | | | | |
| Improve | 34 | 44 | 40 | 22 | 41 | 32 | 34 |
| Get worse | 15 | 10 | 10 | 15 | 13 | 19 | 22 |
| Remain the same | 48 | 44 | 51 | 59 | 43 | 44 | 41 |
| *Average Weekly Grocery Expenses* | | | | | | | |
| Per family | $59 | $58 | $72 | $52 | $72 | $44 | $60 |
| Per person | $23 | $29 | $20 | $26 | $19 | $31 | $20 |

The type of household also relates to the extent of economizing. Shoppers from traditional households are, by far, the most active economizers. These shoppers are most likely to utilize each of the four moneysaving techniques asked about. Of the two remaining groups, unmarried shoppers more often check for specials in newspapers than do shoppers from two-wage-earner households. However, shoppers from two-wage-earner households more often say they use price-off coupons and compare prices at different supermarkets.

Little variation exists in the use of timesaving techniques across shoppers in the three types of households. However, there is a general pattern of shoppers in households with children being more likely to use these techniques. This greater need to save time is supported by the survey findings related to the number of shopping trips made in a week. Shoppers with children report an average of 2.5 trips per week, as compared to the 2.0 trips per week reported by those without children.

**Table 42**

**Supermarket Shopping Habits of Traditional and Less Traditional Types of Households**

Base: The shopping public

| | | Married, Two Wage Earners | | Married, One Spouse at Home | | Unmarried | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | No Children | Children | No Children | Children | No Children | Children |
| Base | 1008 | 127 | 151 | 220 | 190 | 227 | 76 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| *Economizing (Pretty Much Every Time You Shop)* | | | | | | | |
| Look for grocery specials in newspaper | 49 | 40 | 46 | 61 | 48 | 47 | 49 |
| Use price-off coupons | 39 | 37 | 41 | 41 | 46 | 31 | 38 |
| Compare prices at different supermarkets | 29 | 24 | 28 | 38 | 30 | 23 | 30 |
| Go to supermarkets other than principal one for advertised specials | 12 | 9 | 9 | 15 | 17 | 9 | 12 |
| *Saving Time (At Least Occasionally)* | | | | | | | |
| Look only at the items you know you need | 85 | 82 | 92 | 88 | 86 | 81 | 89 |
| Take packaged meat available rather than ask for a different cut | 80 | 78 | 82 | 81 | 82 | 77 | 86 |
| Buy certain brands because they're more visible and easier to find | 64 | 63 | 66 | 60 | 67 | 66 | 63 |
| Go to a convenience store rather than a supermarket | 58 | 52 | 61 | 50 | 63 | 57 | 68 |
| *Number of Different Supermarkets Visited in a Week (Average)* | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 1.5 | 1.7 |
| *Number of Visits to the Supermarket in a Week (Average)* | 2.3 | 2.0 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 2.4 | 2.2 | 2.7 |

Unmarried shoppers are somewhat more likely than married shoppers to expect supermarkets to provide nutrition and health-related information. Perhaps because they expect this information, unmarried shoppers are also most likely to pay a good deal of attention to ingredients on food labels. In contrast, shoppers in two-wage-earner households less often expect supermarkets to provide nutrition and health-related information. They are also the least likely of the three groups to pay attention to ingredients listed on food labels.

Despite these attitudinal and behavioral differences, shoppers in the three groups express roughly comparable levels of concern about the nutritional content of the food they eat. Despite their relative lack of attention to food labels, shoppers in two-wage-earner households most often report avoiding products that have no nutritional information. They are also the most likely to read articles and books on nutrition.

**Table 43** **Nutrition-Related Concerns and Behavior of Traditional and Less Traditional Households**

Base: The shopping public

| | | Married, Two Wage Earners | | Married, One Spouse at Home | | Unmarried | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | No Children | Children | No Children | Children | No Children | Children |
| Base | 1008 | 127 | 151 | 220 | 190 | 227 | 76 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Very concerned about nutritional content of what I eat | 63 | 63 | 64 | 62 | 63 | 65 | 59 |
| Pay a good deal of attention to ingredients listed on food labels | 40 | 36 | 33 | 44 | 37 | 45 | 45 |
| Feel providing nutrition and health information is a supermarket's responsibility | 38 | 36 | 32 | 40 | 38 | 36 | 50 |
| *Frequently* | | | | | | | |
| Check government grading on meats and poultry | 53 | 52 | 52 | 57 | 49 | 56 | 44 |
| Avoid buying products that have no nutritional information | 40 | 46 | 45 | 38 | 40 | 37 | 39 |
| Read articles and books on nutrition | 34 | 38 | 40 | 30 | 31 | 37 | 35 |

In terms of food safety, the survey revealed some rather interesting differences among shoppers. These differences do not exist across household types, but rather occur within each type of household depending on whether or not children are present in the household. As noted earlier, shoppers in households without children tend to be older. Therefore, differences are both a function of the presence of children and age of the shopper.

Overall, just under half of all shoppers (47 percent) are concerned that some ingredients in foods may be unsafe to eat. Not surprisingly, shoppers with children more often avoid buying products with sugar. However, they are also more likely to avoid foods containing additives and preservatives, artificial coloring, or that contain residues such as pesticides and herbicides. In contrast, shoppers without children, because they tend to be older, are more likely to avoid buying foods with salt or cholesterol.

**Table 44** **Food Safety-Related Concerns and Behavior of Traditional and Less Traditional Households**

Base: The shopping public

| | | Married, Two Wage Earners | | Married, One Spouse at Home | | Unmarried | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | No Children | Children | No Children | Children | No Children | Children |
| Base | 1008 | 127 | 151 | 220 | 190 | 227 | 76 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Feel concerned that some ingredients added to processed foods may be harmful or unsafe to eat | 47 | 47 | 44 | 43 | 45 | 53 | 44 |
| *Have Avoided Buying Foods Containing:* | | | | | | | |
| Additives and preservatives | 58 | 60 | 59 | 52 | 61 | 57 | 65 |
| Residues such as pesticides and herbicides | 56 | 57 | 58 | 50 | 52 | 59 | 60 |
| Cholesterol | 54 | 60 | 51 | 63 | 49 | 52 | 45 |
| Sugar | 53 | 51 | 63 | 47 | 58 | 50 | 55 |
| Salt | 51 | 60 | 48 | 50 | 47 | 53 | 49 |
| Artificial coloring | 42 | 37 | 47 | 38 | 44 | 42 | 45 |

# METHODOLOGY

## SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE

The data for this survey were collected from 1,008 telephone interviews conducted from January 17 through 30, 1984. The sample was drawn from the civilian adult population of the United States, 18 years of age and older. Households contacted for the survey were selected by a procedure known as random digit dialing (RDD). This procedure ensures the inclusion of individuals with unlisted or not yet listed telephone numbers, as well as those with listed numbers, and, thus, provides a sample that reflects the total U.S. population.

Each household selected by the RDD procedure was screened first for the head of the household (either male or female), and then for recent experience with shopping for groceries. Only heads of households who shopped for groceries in the previous two weeks were interviewed for the survey.

The final sample was controlled to consist of 60 percent female heads of household and 40 percent male heads of household in order to increase the reliability of the male shopper samples. However, the sample was weighted to an 80 percent female-20 percent male ratio to maintain comparability with previous studies in the Trends series.

A profile of the total sample follows.

**Table 45** **Demographic Profile of Supermarket Shoppers**

Base: The shopping public

| | Number in Sample | Unweighted Percentage in Sample | Weighted Percentage in Sample |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | % | % |
| **Total** | **1008** | **100** | **100** |
| *Sex* | | | |
| Men | 404 | 40 | 20 |
| Women | 604 | 60 | 80 |
| Working women | 312 | 31 | 41 |
| Nonworking women | 279 | 28 | 37 |
| *Principal Shoppers** | | | |
| Total | 681 | 68 | 76 |
| Men | 165 | 16 | 8 |
| Women | 516 | 51 | 68 |
| *Type of Household* | | | |
| With children | 417 | 41 | 42 |
| Two wage earners | 280 | 28 | 28 |
| *Age* | | | |
| 18-24 years | 78 | 8 | 7 |
| 25-39 years | 373 | 37 | 37 |
| 40-49 years | 191 | 19 | 20 |
| 50-64 years | 214 | 21 | 21 |
| 65 and over | 143 | 14 | 14 |

**Table 45** **Demographic Profile of Supermarket Shoppers (cont'd.)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Income* | | | |
| $7,500 or less | 97 | 10 | 10 |
| $7,501-$15,000 | 154 | 15 | 16 |
| $15,001-$25,000 | 243 | 24 | 24 |
| $25,001 and over | 388 | 38 | 37 |
| *Race* | | | |
| White | 890 | 88 | 88 |
| Black | 70 | 7 | 7 |
| Hispanic | 48 | 5 | 4 |
| *Marital Status* | | | |
| Single | 149 | 15 | 12 |
| Married | 693 | 69 | 69 |
| Separated/divorced/widowed | 156 | 15 | 18 |
| *Education* | | | |
| High school or less | 545 | 54 | 57 |
| Some college/college graduate | 454 | 45 | 43 |
| *Size of Place*** | | | |
| Central city | 311 | 31 | 29 |
| Remainder of metropolitan area | 445 | 44 | 45 |
| Outside metropolitan area | 252 | 25 | 25 |
| *Region**** | | | |
| East | 255 | 25 | 27 |
| Midwest | 259 | 26 | 26 |
| South | 299 | 30 | 31 |
| West | 195 | 19 | 16 |

*Principal shoppers are those respondents who identified themselves as being the person in their household principally responsible for the weekly food shopping.

**Prior to the 1984 study, the Size of Place categories examined were cities, suburbs, and small town/rural. The current Size of Place categories are in accord with U.S. Census Bureau definitions utilized in the 1980 Census. These categories are similar to, although not definitionally equivalent to, prior categories.

****East includes*: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia.

*Midwest includes*: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

*South includes*: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

*West includes*: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Note: Percentages may add up to less than 100% because of nonresponse.

## Sampling Error

It is important to note that survey results are subject to sampling error, i.e., the difference between obtained results and those that would be obtained by surveying the entire population. The size of this error varies with the size of the sample and with the percentage of respondents giving a particular answer. The following table shows the range of error for samples of four different sizes and at different percentages of response:

**Sample Error (±) at 95% Confidence Level for Samples of Four Different sizes**

| | Size of Sample | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage Response | 1000 | 600 | 400 | 100 |
| | % | % | % | % |
| 10 (90) | 2.2 | 2.4 | 3 | 7 |
| 20 (80) | 2.9 | 3.3 | 4 | 10 |
| 30 (70) | 3.3 | 3.7 | 4.6 | 11 |
| 40 (60) | 3.5 | 4 | 4.9 | 12 |
| 50 | 3.6 | 4.1 | 5 | 12 |

For example, if the percent response for a sample size of 1,000 is 40, in 95 cases out of 100 the response in the population will be between 36.5 percent and 43.5 percent. This figure accounts only for sampling error. Survey research is susceptible to other errors as well, such as data handling and interviewer recording. However, the procedures used by Louis Harris and Associates keep errors of this kind to a minimum.

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